

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 AF-04 ARA-10 EUR-08 ISO-00 SSO-00 SS-15
NSCE-00 AID-01 /042 W

-----044006 132040Z /62

O R 131900Z JUN 78

FM USINT HAVANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2162

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: OPREP SOPN PDEV XA MILI CU

SUBJ: CODEL SOLARZ MEETS WITH FIDEL CASTRO

1. SUMMARY: DURING NINE HOUR MEETING, JUNE 12, WITH CONGRESSMEN SOLARZ AND BEILENSEN, FIDEL CASTRO AGREED TO "FACILITATE" DEPARTURE OF 480 US-CUBAN BINATIONALS AND CUBAN MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILIES (SOME 1700 PEOPLE), DECLINED TO MOVE ON AMCIT POLITICAL PRISONERS, ACCUSED USG OF LYING ON SHABA INCURSION, AND SAID HE WOULD NOT WISH TO COMMIT HIMESLF PUBLICLY TO NON-USE OF CUBAN TROOPS IN ERITREA AND RHODESIA. CASTRO SEEMED PESSIMISTIC REGARDING FUTURE OF US-CUBA RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. CONGRESSMEN STEPHEN SOLARZ (D-NY) AND ANTHONY BEILENSEN (D-CALIFORNIA) MET WITH FIDEL CASTRO, JUNE 12, FOR SEVEN HOURS, OF PRIVATE CONVERSATION, PUNCTUATED BY TWO-HOUR OPEN SESSION WITH ACCOMPANYING NEW YORK TIMES, WASHINGTON POST, AND TIME MAGAZINE CORRESPONDENTS.

3. ALTHOUGH CONVERSATION FOCUSED ON AFRICA, CODEL ALSO RAISED BILATERL ISSUES OF AMCIT DUAL NATIONAL EMIGRATION AND RELEASE
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OF AMCIT POLITICAL PRISONERS. ON LATTER, CASTRO SAID THAT AMCIT POLITICAL PRISONER RELEASE IS NOT POSSIBLE UNDER EXISTING CIRCUMATANCES. RELEASE NOW, CASTRO SAID, WOULD NOT BE UNDERSTOOD BY PEOPLE IN CUBA AND WOULD CREATE "POLITICAL PROBLEMS" IN CUBA.

4. ON BINATIONAL EMIGRATION, CASTRO, IN FIRST PORTION OF

MEETING SAID SIMPLY THAT HE WOULD NOT WANT CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION "TO JEOPARDIZE" DEPARTURE OF THE 480 AMCITS AND THEIR FAMILIES (ABOUT 1700 PEOPLE IN TOTAL). AFTER MEETING WITH JOURNALISTS, CASTRO PRIVATELY TOLD SOLARZ AND BEILENSON THAT, IF HE RECEIVED A LIST OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED, HE WOULD BE "PREPARED TO PROCEED WITH EFFORT TO FACILITATE THEIR DEPARTURE". (COMMENT: CUBAN OFFICER SUPERVISING CODEL VISIT, WHO WAS PRESENT DURING CASTRO MEETING, ASSURED ACTING USINT CHIEF, IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION, THAT CASTRO WAS COMMITTING HIMSELF TO PERMIT DEPARTURE OF BINATIONALS AND THEIR FAMILIES. USINT, IN WAKE OF CODEL RICHMOND/NOLAN VISIT LAST DECEMBER, SUPPLIED LISTS OF BINATIONALS TO MINISTRY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS - MINREX. MANY OF THESE PEOPLE HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN IN CONTACT WITH CUBAN EMIGRATION AUTHORITIES. USINT, JUNE 13, WILL DISPATCH NEW NOTE TO MINREX, CITING CASTRO'S ASSURANCES TO SOLARZ AND BEILENSON AND, PROVIDING LIST OF NAMES OF DUAL NATIONALS SEEKING EXIT PERMISSION)

5. ON SHABA INCIDENT, CASTRO EXPRESSED RAGE (IN FRONT OF JOURNALISTS) AND A SENSE OF PERSONAL HURT THAT HIS EFFORTS TO REMAIN UNINVOLVED AND EVEN TO HEAD OFF ATTACH HAD BEEN RECEIVED SO POORLY IN US. CASTRO WENT OVER MUCH OF SAME GROUND WITH CODEL AS HE DID WITH LYLE LANE, MAY 17. HE SAID THAT CUBANS HAD NO ONGOING ASSOCIATION WITH KATANGESE IN MILITARY, TECHNICAL, OR INTELLIGENCE-GATHERING FIELDS SINCE END OF ANGOLAN WAR. HE SAID THAT RUMORS OF A POSSIBLE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SHABA ATTACH HAD REACHED HIM IN APRIL, AND THAT HE HAD BROUGHT REPORTS TO ATTENTION OF NETO. NETO HAD URGED RESTRAINT ON KATANGESE, BUT NETO THEN DEPARTED COUNTRY THINKING PROBLEM SOLVED. CASTRO CLAIMED THAT HE OPPOSED SHABA ATTACH BECAUSE IT WOULD DESTABILIZE RELATIONS BETWEEN ANGOLA AND ZAIRE AND DIVERT ATTENTION FROM PRINCIPAL AFRICAN PROBLEM - OVERTURN OF MINORITY RULE IN RHODESIA, NAMIBIA, AND SOUTH AFRICA.

6. WHEN ASKED WHETHER IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE FOR UNAUTHORIZED, INDIVIDUAL CUBANS OR EVEN CUBAN DEFECTORS TO BE INVOLVED IN KATANGESE TRAINING ACTIVITIES, CASTRO "CATEGORICALLY REJECTED" THESE POSSIBILITIES, CLAIMING THAT HAVANA KNOWS WHERE EVERY CUBAN SOLDIER IS LOCATED AND THAT CUBANS HAVE NOT HAD ONE SINGLE DEFECTOR. (COMMENT: LATTER STATEMENT IS FALSE, BUT CASTRO CONCEIVABLY MAY NOT BE FULLY INFORMED.) CASTRO ADDED THAT EASTERN ANGOLA IS LARGE AND UNINHABITED, THAT CUBANS HAD NO CONTACT, AND DID NOT EVEN HAVE DOCTOR, WITH KATANGESE.

7. CASTRO LAID OUT FOLLOWING OUTLINE TO BUTTRESS HIS CONTENTION THAT USG WAS "GROSS" AND "BRUTAL" IN RESPONDING TO HIS "GESTURE" OF INFORMING USG OF CUBAN "NON-INVOLVEMENT" IN SHABA EVENTS.

FIRST, HE SAID, CUBANS HAD RECEIVED A COMMUNICATION FROM
USG ON MAY 15 (COMMENT: NOT VIA USINT HAVANA), WHICH
INDICATED THAT US WAS CONCERNED WITH SHABA SITUATION
THEN, TWO STATEMENTS WERE MADE IN US (PRESUMABLY IN PRESS
BRIEFINGS) INDICATING THAT CUBANS APPEARED NOT TO BE INVOLVED
IN SHABA. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, CASTRO DECIDED TO MAKE
GESTURE TO USG BY TELLING LANE, ON MAY 17, THAT CUBANS WERE
NOT INVOLVED IN ANY WAY. IN REPLY TO THIS, US ON MAY 18 OR 19
PASSED MESSAGE TO CUBANS (WHICH CASTRO READ, BUT DID NOT GIVE, TO
JOURNALISTS) EXPRESSING THANKS FOR ASSURANCES RECEIVED AND SUGGEST-
ING CUBAN ISSUANCE OF PUBLIC STATEMENT ON NON-INVOLVEMENT-WHICH
CUBANS DID NO MAY 21. CUBAN VICE-PRESIDENT CARLOS RAFAEL
RODRIGUEZ, THEN AT UN, ALSO CABLED THAT USG WAS SATISFIED
WITH CUBAN ASSURANCES.
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8. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND OF APPARENT USG SATISFACTION,
CASTRO SAID HE WAS "TRAUMATIZED" BY MAY 19 LEAD OF HIS MEETING WITH
LANE AND STATEMENT BY STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN, MAY 19,
THAT CUBANS WERE DEEPLY INVOLVED FROM THE BEGINNING IN
SHABA INVASION. HE SAID THESE US STATEMENTS - "A BIG LIE" - (WHICH
HE TOLD JOURNALISTS, EMANATED FROM DR. BRZEZINSKI'S OFFICE)
WERE MADE WITHOUT ANY PRIOR EFFORT TO ELICIT A CUBAN RESPONSE,
EVEN THOUGH USG ON PREVIOUS DAY HAD EXPRESSED SATISFACTION
WITH CUBAN ASSURANCES. (COMMENT: ACCORDING TO CONGRESSMEN,
CASTRO SOUGHT TO CREATE IMPRESSION THAT HE FELT DEEPLY
AND PERSONALLY WOUNDED BY THIS APPARENT WASHINGTON TURN-
AROUND. WHILE FAIRLY REASONABLE IN PRESENCE OF CONGRESSMEN,
BY TIME HE SAY JOURNALISTS CASTRO HAD APPARENTLY WORKED
HIMSELF INTO HIGHLY AROUSED STATE AND CONDEMNED HIS PERCEIVED
ENEMIES IN WASHINGTON - DR. BRZEZINSKI AND CIA - IN VERY
SHARP TERMS.)

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INFO OCT-01 AF-04 ARA-10 EUR-08 ISO-00 SSO-00 SS-15
NSCE-00 AID-01 /042 W
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O R 131900Z JUN 78
FM USINT HAVANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2163
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
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9. REGARDING SHABA EVIDENCE, CASTRO CLAIMED THAT CIA FABRICATED CASE TO REMOVE LEGISLATIVE RESTRICTIONS ON ITS ABILITY TO OPERATE. CASTRO PARTICULARLY DISCOUNTED KATANGAN POW REPORTING AS INTRINSICALLY UNRELIABLE. CASTRO RHETORICALLY ALSO ASKED HOW HE COULD RISK DELIBERATELY LYING CONSIDERING THE DAMAGE IT WOULD DO TO HIS "FRIENDS" -SENATOR MCGOVERN, SENATOR CHURCH, AMBASSADOR YOUNG, AND SECRETARY VANCE.

10. CASTRO SAID THAT HE DOES NOT INTEND TO CRITICIZE PRESIDENT CARTER PERSONALLY. HE EXPRESSED "SADNESS" AND "DISMAY" AT FACT THAT PRESIDENT'S ADVISORS ARE "MISINFORMING" HIM. HE SAID THAT PRESIDENT WAS "DECEIVED" AND "CONFUSED". IN REPLY TO CONGRESSMAN BEILENSON'S SUGGESTION, CASTRO INDICATED THAT HE IS PERFECTLY WILLING TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT CARTER, BUT HE RECOGNIZED THAT SUCH A MEETING IN CURRENT POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO BRING ABOUT.

11. ON ETHIOPIA, CASTRO SPOKE HIGHLY OF MENGISTU AND DID NOT REFER TO ANY CUBAN -ETHIOPIAN DIFFICULTIES. HE SAID THAT HE COULD NOT MAKE A PUBLIC COMMITMENT NOT TO USE CUBAN TROOPS IN ERITREA SINCE THIS WOULD UNACCEPTABLY LIMIT HIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FLEXIBILITY. ON OTHER HAND, CASTRO DENIED THAT CUBAN COMBAT TROOPS ARE NOW IN ERITREA, AND SAID THAT CUBA PREFERS A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE ERITREAN PROBLEM WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF MARXIST-LENINIST ETHIOPIAN STATE. HE, HOWEVER, COULD NOT BE DRAWN OUT ON DETAILS OF CURRENT POLITICAL AND MILITARY MANEUVERINGS WITH REGARD TO ERITREA, OTHER THAN TO SAY THAT IF ERITREAN MOVEMENT WERE TO BECOME "COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY" AND SEEK TO DESTROY ETHIOPIAN REGIME CUBANS MIGHT HAVE TO BECOME INVOLVED. CASTRO ADDED THAT IF CUBAN TROOPS WERE NOW WITHDRAWN FROM ETHIOPIA, SOMALIS WOULD AGAIN INVADE.

12. ON ANGOLA, CASTRO EXPRESSED HIGH REGARD FOR NETO AND DID NOT ALLUDE TO INTERNAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN MPLA. HE SAID THAT MPLA ENJOYS OVERWHELMING SUPPORT IN ALL PARTS OF COUNTRY, INCLUDING SOUTH. UNLIKE ETHIOPIA, CASTRO COMPLETELY DISCOUNTED POSSIBILITY OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN MPLA AND

SAVIMBI - REFERRING TO LATTER'S TIES WITH SOUTH AFRICA AND KILLING OF PRISONERS.

13. TURNING TO RHODESIA, CASTRO ALSO SAID THAT HE WOULD NOT PUBLICLY COMMIT HIMSELF NOT TO SEND TROOPS INTO THAT COUNTRY, SINCE THIS WOULD REMOVE INCENTIVE FOR SMITH TO MAKE CONCESSIONS.

14. CASTRO SAID THAT, AS A MATTER OF GENERAL POLICY, HE DOES NOT PROMOTE SUBVERSION OF GOVERNMENTS IN AFRICA. IN THIS CONTEXT, HE POINTED OUT THAT, WHILE HE DOES NOT HAVE CONTACTS WITH KATANGAN GENDARME LEADERS, MASS OF KATANGAN FORCES ARE NOW OPPOSED TO SHABA SECESSION, AND ARE COMMITTED TO OVERTHROW OF MOBUTU WHILE HE WOULD BE JUSTIFIED IN HELPING KATANGANS BECAUSE OF MOBUTU'S SPONSORSHIP OF FNLA AND FLEC, CASTRO REITERATED HE HAD NOT DONE SO. ONLY LIBERATION GROUPS BEING ASSISTED, HE CLAIMED, WERE PATRIOTIC FRONT, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SWAPO, AND SOUTH AFRICA'S ANC.

15. IN BRIEF EXCURSION ON MIDDLE EAST, CASTRO INDICATED THAT HE OPPOSED THE SADAT INITIATIVE AS DESTRUCTIVE OF ARAB SOLIDARITY, BUT WOULD NOT CRITICIZE IT PUBLICLY.

16. LOOKING AT FUTURE OF US-CUBAN RELATIONS, CASTRO SAID THAT HE WAS LESS THAN OPTIMISTIC, GIVEN "DELIBERATE MISREPRESENTATION" OF CUBAN ACTIONS IN AFRICA. HE SAID THAT OPENING OF INTERESTS SECTIONS HAD BEEN POSITIVE ACTION, BUT IF US CLOSED THEM "SO BE IT". HE (CASTRO) WAS PREPARED TO WAIT ANOTHER TWENTY YEARS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. CASTRO GAVE JOURNALISTS "MESSAGE TO AMERICAN PEOPLE" WHICH STATED THAT HE IS FIRM IN HIS RESPECT AND ADMIRATION FOR AMERICAN PEOPLE WHATEVER ACTION IS TAKEN BY THEIR "RULERS".

17. COMMENT:CASTRO CLEARLY SEEMED INTENT ON CONVEYING THE IMPRESSION THROUGH THE CONGRESSMEN TO THE US PUBLIC THAT HE HAS BEEN ABUSED BY ADMINISTRATION. THIS EFFORT IS PRESUMABLY INTENDED TO EXPLOIT "UNDERDOG" SYMPATHIES IN US AND TO SPLIT OFF DOVISH ELEMENTS IN ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS FROM HAWKS. WHILE CASTRO MAY NOT BE PARTICULARLY CONFIDENT OF THE SUCCESS OF HIS MANEUVERINGS, HIS APPARENT DECISION TO PERMIT DEPARTURE OF THE 480 DUAL NATIONALS SUGGESTS THAT HE STILL CONTINUES TO BE INTERESTED IN, AND HOPEFUL OF, LIMITING DAMAGE TO NORMALIZATION PROCESS, WITH US. NONETHELESS, CASTRO'S UNBENDING LINE ON HAVANA'S MILITARY PARTICIPATION IN ANGOLA, ETHIOPIA, AND RHODESIA INDICATES THAT THE CUBAN LEADER IS STILL PREPARED TO WRITE OFF FUTURE US LINKS BEFORE SACRIFICING AFRICAN FREEDOM OF ACTION.

18. FYI: MOST OF MATERIAL IN PARAS ONE THROUGH SIXTEEN WERE
BRIEFED BY CONGRESSMEN TO PRESS. END FYI.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CODELS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978HAVANA01598
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780247-0390
Format: TEL
From: HAVANA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780666/aaaacezc.tel
Line Count: 280
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 6e65498a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION H
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2377931
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CODEL SOLARZ MEETS WITH FIDEL CASTRO
TAGS: OREP, SOPN, PDEV, MILI, XA, CU, (CASTRO, FIDEL), (SOLARZ, STEPHEN J)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6e65498a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014